

THE ROLE OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS STRUCTURE OF ADOLESCENTS

Ovidiu[□] Bendorfean

The Association of Integrative Research, Counselling and Psychotherapy, Timisoara, Romania

Corresponding author: Ovidiu Bendorfean. Email address: ovidiu.bendorfean@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT. Now is here ..., the time when the human race discovers and rediscovers the complexity and beauty of itself and one of the words that can open these locked doors, for some periods of time, is confidence, in yourself and in the person next to you; therefore, confidence begins to grow when one begins the journey towards himself, towards models and patterns discovered, which were created or borrowed, been aware or mostly unaware of them, that bring feelings or emotions such as: safety, reliability, happiness and prosperity. Words that can be only words or attributes, drawn from personal experience and which can be found in the main relation that one can have, the relation that exists between him and himself. This is why confidence is important and starts, for everybody, in different ways but with the first word, a word that speaks for us before we open our mouth. Gestures and posture, with mimicry, the use of space, eye contact, body touches, clothing, smells, etc. replace words on different occasions. These and more, are what is defined by the phrase “nonverbal communication”. In interpersonal communication, words are not enough. Sometimes the word is just useless, especially for teens, which are the most important humans, due to their age, the period in their life and the impact that they have upon themselves, others and last but not least, due to the impact that these can have on mankind after this period of time. Some questions arise and need to be answered and are mandatory if we want to assume responsibility and be the change that we want to see it in the world.

KEYWORDS: confidence, models, nonverbal, communication, interpersonal.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. History of nonverbal communication

Knowledge of how to communicate without words has a long prehistory and a very brief history.

The prehistory field of study of nonverbal communication covers an extended period, from antiquity until the late 19th century. “In the Western tradition, the oldest attempts of a systematic approach to expressive action, both in the writings of Greece and later Rome, were granted to gestures, in one way or another” (Kendon & Müller, 2001).

The first public teacher of rhetoric speaking in Rome, Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (c. 35-96 C.E.), has established one of the twelve volumes of the compendium Institutes of oratory (public speaker training) pronunciation (voice and gestures). This volume (XI), the only one that was kept until today, gives us detailed information about body language used by the Roman orator conception.

During the first decades of the 18th century, a revival of an interest in the study of gestures reappeared - Kendon Adam and Cornelia Müller appreciated the editorial of the first issue of *Gesture* (2001). Venice, Giovanni Bonifacio published in 1616 *Arts' CENNI*. In London, John Bulwer published *Chironomia* (1644).

During the following centuries, the writings on possibilities to know people according to their body constitution, the configuration of the face and skull, as well as according to their facial expressions - were multiplying.

The history of science, of nonverbal communication, also speaks about precursors, during the mid twentieth century (Ch. Darwin D. Efron, E. Kretschmer, W.H. Sheldon); about founders, between 1950 and 1980 (R.L. Birdwhistell, J.R. Davitz, P. Ekman, L.K. Frank, E.T. Hall, R. Rosenthal), and about today's researchers in the field, in the last two or three decades (R. Akert, M. Argyle, J.K. Burgoon, D.B. Buller, J. Corraze, M.L. Knapp, J. Streeck, W.G. Woodall and many others).

This attempt to identify the development stages of the nonverbal communication field research inevitably has a certain artificial note: no borders temporal stages rigidly intertwined can be established, and some classics in the field are actually contemporaries.

1.2. Current framework of this orientation

What is the structure of nonverbal communication? In other words, what signs, codes and communication channels are used? The fundamental meaning of the term of nonverbal communication, that is closely used in this paper, follows the excellent work of communication models for the study of mass

communication of McQuail and Windahl (1982/2001: 11-13). By “communication” one could exemplify any transmission of information, ideas and emotions from a social entity (person, group human body) to another through messages. If the etymology of the concept of “communication” is clear: comunico, Latin, action to do something common to share with someone, to share (Guțu, 1993), the same can be said about the meaning of the term in literature.

More than thirty years ago, Franck E.X. Dance (1970) listed no less than fifteen meanings that can be associated with the term communication:

- verbal exchange thoughts and ideas;
- the process by which we understand others, and alternatively, we strive to be understood by them;
- interaction (even at the biological level);
- the process that arises from the need to reduce uncertainty, to act effectively and protect or strengthen the self;
- the process of transmission of: information, ideas, emotions and skills through the use of symbols (words, images, figures, diagrams, etc.); ...
- the process of transition from a situation generally structured in a different situation, which is in perfect form;
- a mechanism by which power is exercised (in Fârte, 2004).

Communication can be “verbal” when information is transmitted through articulated language (oral or written) or “non-verbal” when we spoken language isn’t used.

The term “nonverbal communication” has a wider scope than “behaviour nonverbal,” which designates an intentional or unintentional modification of a person’s posture in relation to a system of spatial cues or relocates the body component (head, torso, states, etc.) in relation to a system of rectangular axes, excepting those limiting production, forced movements or body movement in space if persons don’t offer their consent.

As verbal communication, nonverbal communication, can also be modelled in terms of transmitter, receiver, message, channel communication, effect, feedback and context of communicative acts. The “Transmitter” is the source of messages; the “Receptor” is the recipient. “The Message” has a meaning that is “encoded” (translated into a code in a system of signs, appropriate communication channel and receiver) by the sender and by the “decoded” (re-translated) by the receiver.

The decoding nonverbal communication process of messages must also take into consideration the cultural context, cultural information related to an act of communication, etc.

2. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

In the areas where the activity as psychologist and psychotherapist was developed so far, nonverbal communication and interpersonal relations are particular important in terms of functional performance of duties, under optimum conditions in every aspect.

Adolescents were chosen for this study because, from a personal point of view, the teenage period is one of the most important periods of life, where issues have a role in the development of the individual, as well as providing the necessary support for the fullness of forces and decisions taken.

Another reason for choosing this study subject is the experience gained so far, the consequence of decisions taken and behaviours in different situations and in certain entourages.

It is believed that a well-built character can lead to becoming true professional who can succeed at any time, any place.

When a person knows himself and better understands himself, one can also understand situations and is able to understand others, thus developing harmonious and healthy relations, based on principles that will strengthen and develop communication and structure interpersonal relationships, both directly and indirectly, especially if this process is begun at an early age and stresses during adolescence; when the individual reaches maturity and certain organs and senses can dictate life course from now on.

The overall objective of the research was to determine the importance given to the role of nonverbal communication in interpersonal relations between adolescents structured into military personnel and civilian contract personnel working in the army.

The specific objectives of the research were:

1. The degree of influence of nonverbal communication in personal training process during adolescence;
2. The influence of nonverbal communication in interpersonal relationships of adolescents;
3. The degree of interdependence between nonverbal communication and interpersonal relations structure of adolescents.

The quality of interpersonal relationships influences the structure of nonverbal communication for adolescents, thus being able to identify a close link between the role of nonverbal communication and interpersonal relations structure of adolescents.

3. METHOD

The non-random sampling method or based reasoning method was chosen for this study, which is primarily based on statistics and on a personal judgment, thus trying to take the minimum necessary information in all categories, for a more accurate and efficient analysis.

The instrument chosen is the questionnaire.

The study sample is represented by a total of 64 respondents from the Military Unit Number 01473 Sibiu and the School of Applications for Combat Support Units "General Eremia Grigorescu" Sibiu.

A questionnaire composed of 12 questions was used and applied to the respondents that agreed to participate in this study.

In order to ensure a clarity for the questions asked, another questionnaire with short, to the point questions was created; questions aimed a logic flow to at primary objective and to the specific research.

A percentage of 20% of respondents were girls, and the ages were between 24 and 60 years.

All 64 respondents have contracts with the Ministry of Defence and work inside the unit.

Regarding the distribution into activity branches of the respondents surveyed, 21 of them are in Artillery branch, four of the respondents are in the Communications and Information branch, 28 of the respondents are civil personnel under contract, three respondents belong to the Intendancy branch, and the others come from the Logistics branch, the Genius branch, which has a representative, as well as financial and military police and two people belong to the Medical branch.

In order to better present the results obtained in this study, the presentation of each individual's answers or answers to each question was realized. In this way, conclusions will be substantiated in a coherent and consistent way and will provide a basis for the construction of relevant subsequent conclusions and future proposals.

4. RESULTS

The questionnaire method was used in this study, being composed of 12 questions and applied to the sample presented above. To ensure clarity of questions, a questionnaire with short questions was also formulated. The order of questions was established in such a manner that it could determine the subject's decision to cooperate with the investigation and answer any questions.

In formulating questions, a number of rules of the most importance was taken into account, namely: simple words, understandable and the words and

concepts used are appropriate for the category of people participating in this study. Thus, the questionnaire was designed for precise wording, unambiguous questions, without leaving room for different interpretations.

In developing the questionnaire used in this study, the possibility of correlating the results obtained from a quantitative analysis of the respondents' perception on the role of nonverbal communication in the structure of interpersonal relationships of adolescents, was taken into consideration; while in establishing the general and specific objectives this instrument allowed the underlining of the idea that the respondents' opinion on the role of nonverbal communication is influenced by the structure of nonverbal communication and interpersonal relationships of adolescents; thus being able to identify the close connection between these hypotheses.

The fact that communication and the quality of nonverbal communication is influenced by the interpersonal relationships structure of adolescents and the quality of nonverbal communication alone was shown not to be enough in having major effects on the process of training.

The overall objective of the research was reached by showing the importance given to the role of nonverbal communication in interpersonal relations between adolescents structured by military personnel and civilian contract personnel working in the army. Specific objectives of the research were accomplished due to the types of the questions, their order and by direct observation of the respondents when they were answering the questions and how they have been given me the responses after they finished answering to other questions correlated to the questionnaire that helped me to establish if they understand correct some terms and my objectives, thus:

1. The degree of influence of nonverbal communication in personal training process in adolescence was accomplished;
2. The influence of nonverbal communication in interpersonal relationships in adolescents was accomplished;
3. The degree of interdependence between nonverbal communication and interpersonal relations structure in adolescents was accomplished.

As a conclusion, the assumption was proven to be valid; respondents were aware of nonverbal communication such as its role in the structure of interpersonal relationships of adolescents and how this influences their formation, appreciating its true value.

Communication is important for more than 80% of respondents, and for more than 60% it represents an important factor in conducting their actions. But

when taking into consideration the teenage period, answers are different:

Table 1 Distribution of answers for how nonverbal communication influenced training during teenage years

	Frequency	Percent	Percentage valid	Percent cumulative
Very big	13	20,31	20	20
Big	32	50	50	70
Average	14	1,56	2	92
Weak	4	6,25	6	98
Very weak	1	1,56	2	100

Interpersonal relations are important for all of the respondents, but the structure of nonverbal

communication in interpersonal relationships for adolescents has received different qualifications:

Table 2 How important is nonverbal communication in interpersonal relationships for adolescents

	Frequency	Percent	Percentage valid	Percent cumulative
Very big	17	26,56	27	27
Big	32	50	50	77
Average	11	17,18	17	94
Weak	3	4,68	5	99
Very weak	1	1,56	2	100

More than 90% consider nonverbal communication more important than verbal communication, and almost all of the respondents consider they know the correct definition of both verbal and nonverbal

communication, thus their classification seems to be correct.

The degree of interdependence received different percentages from respondents:

Table 3 Degree of interdependence between nonverbal communication and interpersonal structure for adolescents

	Frequency	Percent	Percentage valid	Percent cumulative
Very big	18	28,12	28	28
Big	31	48,43	48	76
Average	15	23,43	23	100
Weak	0	0	0	100
Very weak	0	0	0	100

After a comparison of observations made during years of experience, the role of nonverbal communication demonstrated a higher degree than other methods of communication, in terms of awareness, training, coaching and perfection as humans, in certain situations, forming us as role models in life, but also as managers and leaders who have followed a process of transformation and development as human beings, therefore providing the proof that we are worthy of respect, esteem and appreciation.

As a general conclusion, this paper presented some concepts related to nonverbal communication and a focus on the role of nonverbal communication in the structure of interpersonal relations between adolescents in order to highlight its role and

importance, its relationship with other disciplines and the interconnectivity between them.

The study noted that respondents place a high value on communication; that they are aware of the beneficial role played by it in the course of their lives, of the symbiotic relationship between the branch of communication as art and other sectors and of the lack of it when it comes to treating separately kinds, types or classifications of communication.

Communication is one of the most important factors while working as a trainer, thus the following ideas can be underlined: the same standards on the virtues of communication and focus on nonverbal communication in a higher percentage was maintained, thus being able to participate in the future formative process as: citizen, leader, and last but not least as a HUMAN BEING.

Communication cannot define us as people without a corresponding view as a whole.

Thus the following conclusions could also be drawn: communication is important due to its role in education and forming; it functions as a whole; it develops the human being by extending its boundaries into all fields with the accumulation of the highest level of education.

A few solutions, according to the results of the study presented, can be offered: respect for communication and education by granting proper importance, supporting these activities through people that promote them so that everybody can experience the joy of travelling through life if he or she is educated.

REFERENCES

- Dance F.** (1970). The “Concept” of Communication. *Journal of Communication*. Volume 20, Issue 2 June 1970. 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1970.tb00877.x
- Fârte, Gh.-I.** (2004) *Comunicare politică, în Filosofie și Științe politice*, Iasi: “Al. I. Cuza” University Publishing House
- Gutu Gh.** (1993). *Dictionar Latin-Roman*. Bucharest: Scientific Publishing House
- Kendon, A. and Müller, C.** (2001). Introducing GESTURE. *Gesture* 1 (1): 1–7. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/gest.1.1.01ken>
- McQuail D., Windahl D.** (1982/2000) *Communication Models: For the Study of Mass Communications*. Front Cover. Longman.